

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Accounts and Audit Committee
Date: 24th November 2022
Report for: Approval
Report of: Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Report Title

Annual Governance Statement – 2021/22

Summary

The preparation and publication of an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is necessary to meet the statutory requirement set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. This report provides the final version of the 2021/22 AGS.

The Committee previously received a report in July setting out the Draft AGS. Draft versions of the AGS had also previously been shared and reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team.

Since the draft version was presented to the Accounts and Audit Committee on 20th July 2022 the significant issues for 2022/23 have been updated. Any further issues arising in 2022/23 impacting on governance and developments in relation to governance issues reported to date will be considered as part of the process for compiling the 2022/23 AGS.

Once the AGS has been approved by the Accounts and Audit Committee, subject to the completion of the 2021/22 audit, and approval of the Final Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit Committee, the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement will be signed by the Chief Executive and Leader and published on the Council's website.

Recommendation

The Accounts and Audit Committee is asked to approve the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Alexander Murray – Governance Officer Extension: 4250

Background Papers: None



TRAFFORD COUNCIL

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021/22

Executive Summary

2021/22 has been a year of transition as Trafford prepares to move forward from the Covid 19 pandemic towards a “new normal”. This is evident within the many reviews and updates across Trafford Council services with the most notable example being the refresh of the Council’s Corporate Strategy. The refreshed Corporate Strategy identifies three core priorities for the Council. The first two of those priorities (Tackling Health Inequalities and Supporting People Out of Poverty) reflect the lessons learnt from the pandemic, where those in the areas with the highest levels of deprivation suffered most, which widened the levels of inequality across the Country. The third priority focuses upon continuing to tackle the Climate Emergency declared by Trafford Council back in 2018. While the priorities were shaped by learning from the past the corporate plan is forward facing as encapsulated by its title “Our Trafford, Our Future”. By tackling the three priorities Trafford aim to deliver three objectives of: all residents having access to quality learning, training and jobs; all communities being happy, healthy and safe; and all businesses and town centres being supported to recover and flourish for the benefit of everyone.

The shape of health and social care services in Trafford will be vastly different in 2022/23 with the introduction of the Integrated Care System. In preparation for this change 2021/22 year has seen a vast amount of work completed by colleagues across health and social care to develop the new arrangements and supported the transition to ensure minimal disruption to service users. The Trafford Locality Plan 2019-2024 was refreshed in November 2021 to ensure the aims are achievable post covid and the plan aligns with the new health and social care system.

Policies have been updated across all areas of the Council to ensure Trafford is well positioned to recover from the pandemic. Human Resources developed policies to guide staff in utilising technology while maintaining a healthy work/life balance. The IT team have updated all policies in line with the new approach to working and to reflect the ongoing changes resulting from the transition to windows 365. Trafford’s Legal team led on the update of the Constitutional Contract Procedure Rules for all STaR Authorities ensuring services are procured in an efficient and robust manner. The Council’s Governance arrangements were also strengthened with the adoption of a new Code of Conduct for Members, a review of the Council’s Scrutiny function, and the establishment of the Capital Programme Board.

Trafford Council’s finances continue to be an area of concern as shown by the highest priority on the risk register being the Council Medium Term Financial Position. Adult

Social Care continues to be of particular concern, reflected in the additional 1% increase in Council Tax agreed for 2022/23.

While Trafford made some good progress in addressing the significant governance issues identified in the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement it has not been sufficient to prevent those areas continuing to be of concern for 2022/23. The one exception to this is the response to the Ofsted report. The continued improvement, especially the establishment of strong corporate governance as noted by Ofsted, has led to this item being removed from the significant governance risks for 2022/23.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sykes', with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

Dominique Sykes
Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer

1. Scope of Responsibility

- 1.1 Trafford Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and provides value for money. Trafford Council has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to continuously improve how its functions are exercised, with regards to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 This overall responsibility requires Trafford Council put in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 Trafford Council has approved and adopted a corporate governance code, consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. A copy of the Authority's code is available at: <http://www.trafford.gov.uk/about-your-council/budgets-and-accounts/downloadable-documents.aspx>. This statement explains how Trafford Council has complied with the Code and meets the requirement of Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021, regulation 6, that all relevant bodies are required to prepare an annual governance statement and statement of internal control.
- 1.4 The Authority undertook a review throughout the financial year 2021/22 of its compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code which outlines the principles of good financial management. This will be reported to the Accounts and Audit Committee in July 2022.

2. Purpose of the Governance Framework

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled. The framework covers the Council's activities through which; it is accountable to, engages with, and leads its communities. It also enables the Authority to monitor performance against strategic objectives and evaluate whether those objectives are fit for purpose.
- 2.2 The system of internal control forms a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk. However, it can only reduce risk of failure and provide reasonable, not absolute, assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise risks to the achievement of Trafford Council's policies, aims and objectives. The system also ensures that identified risks are evaluated, according to their likelihood and potential impact, and managed efficiently, effectively, and economically.
- 2.3 The governance framework has been in place at Trafford Council for the year ending 31 March 2022 and up to the date of approval of the statement of accounts.

3. The Governance Framework

3.1 The Authority has adopted a local governance framework consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' 2016 edition. Trafford Council's Corporate Governance Code details how the Authority meets the requirements of the framework and is aligned to the principles of good governance in local government set out in the CIPFA framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA, IFAC, 2014):

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
- Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of leadership and the individuals within it
- Managing risk and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

3.2 The Annual Governance Statement sets out how the Authority has complied with the Code and meets with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (as amended). The Authority also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control through the publication of the Annual Governance Statement. It is subject to detailed review by the Accounts and Audit Committee when they consider the final Statements of Account but before they approve the Statement of Accounts.

3.3 The Authority's financial management arrangements are consistent with a number of the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016). The key principles for which there is compliance are that the Chief Financial Officer (Corporate Director of Finance and Systems):

- is actively involved and is able to bring influence on the Authority's financial strategy;
- leads the whole Authority in the delivery of good financial management;
- directs a fit for purpose finance function; and
- is professionally qualified and suitably experienced.

In addition, the Statement requires that the Chief Finance Officer should report directly to the Chief Executive and be a member of the leadership team, with a status at least equivalent to others.

The Director of Finance and Systems (the Chief Finance Officer and designated Section 151 officer) is a member of and attends the meetings of the Corporate Leadership Team.

3.4 The key elements of the system and processes that comprise the Authority's governance framework are outlined in this Annual Governance Statement. The Statement demonstrates the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements during 2021/22 in line with the seven governance principles

CIPFA SOLACE Principle A.	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<p>Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution • Members Code of Conduct • Register of Interests • Standards Committee • Corporate Governance Code • Employee Code of Conduct • Disciplinary Policy • IT Policies • Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy • Confidential Reporting Code
<p>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2021/22</p>	
<p>The Council conducted a review of the Members Code of Conduct utilising the model code provided by the LGA. The model code, guidance, and current code of conduct were shared with the Standards Committee at their meeting on the 22nd of September 2021. At the meeting a series of actions were agreed, which included consultation with other authorities, Members, and Parish Councils. Following the completion of those actions, a draft of the new Members Code of Conduct was presented to the Standards Committee meeting on the 15th of December 2021. The New Code was approved by the Standards Committee, Scrutiny Committee, and Executive before the final submission to Council on the 23rd of March 2022 where the Code of Conduct was adopted.</p> <p>Key IT policies have been reviewed and updated during the last twelve months to reflect new ways of working and the introduction of new solutions. The Council's Information Security Policy and Network Security Policy were updated in March 2022. The IT Acceptable Use Policy will be reviewed and updated during 2022 to reflect changes introduced with the implementation of Microsoft 365. A review of other IT policies will be undertaken during the remainder of 2022.</p> <p>The 2020/21 Annual Report for the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Team was presented to the Accounts and Audit Committee on 25 November 2021 outlining fraud prevention and detection activities and further planned work in 2021/22. During</p>	

2021/22, the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Team have primarily investigated errors/irregularities in relation to council tax, business rates, social care finance and COVID-19 business support grants. Several investigations are still ongoing and outcomes from 2021/22 counter-fraud activity will be provided to the Accounts and Audit Committee at its meeting in September 2022.

The Council participates in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching exercise. An update was provided by the Audit and Assurance Service to the [Accounts and Audit Committee on 2 February 2022](#) setting out work undertaken and outcomes from work completed in 2021/22. A further update will be included in the 2021/22 Annual Head of Internal Audit Report.

The Council's Whistleblowing Policy, which is one of a number of policies to support the Council's overall Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, was reviewed and updated during 2021/22. Further work will be undertaken to review the Strategy and supporting guidance in 2022/23.

CIPFA SOLACE Principle B.	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<p>Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision Making Protocols • Access to Information Procedure Rules • Consultation, including Budget Consultation • Trafford Partnership Board & Strategic Boards • Public Service Reform Board & Operational Group • Building Strong Communities Strategy • Locality Working Programme • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment • Provider Collaborative • Locality Board • GMCA
<p>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2021/22</p>	
<p>The Trafford COVID-19 Public Engagement Board, created in August 2020 has been an excellent example of the Council's commitment to public and stakeholder engagement. The Board met every two weeks in 2021/22 and had a strong membership made up of Councillors, Officers from Public Health, Trafford Council, Trafford CCG, Health and Social Care Providers, and representatives of Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations. The Board presented opportunity for in-depth questioning by elected Members and partner organisations regarding the management of the pandemic response and provided detailed information on the situation in Trafford. The Board served as an excellent conduit for information sharing</p>	

during the pandemic as shown through regular reporting in local newspapers referencing information on the Covid 19 situation provided by the Board.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) gives overarching information on the current (and future) health and social care needs of local communities in Trafford. It provides an evidence base to inform and guide the commissioning and provision of health, well-being and social care services. Trafford's JSNA is available online via the Council website and is kept updated by the Public Health team. In addition to demographic data, the JSNA provides in-depth information on specific topics, including children's health and information on the differing needs by neighbourhood.

Trafford publishes the following documents online annually:

- Pay Policy Statement to support the Annual Budget;
- Constitution.
- Council, Cabinet and Committee Reports;
- Scheme of delegation reports; and
- Information on payments over £500;

During the year the new arrangements for delivery of NHS services following the dissolution of Clinical Commissioning Groups have been established. Within those arrangements the Trafford Locality Board will agree the shared priorities and strategic direction for health and care in Trafford and undertake all functions and duties delegated by NHS GM. It will ensure all relevant elements of NHS and local authority services are aligned with the shared Trafford strategic direction. It will agree resource allocation within the scope of responsibility delegated to it and act as an interface with NHS GM Integrated Care Board and GM Integrated Care Partnership Board.

The Trafford Provider Collaborative Board will act as the engine room of the Trafford Locality Board, shaping, co-designing and delivering services in line with the priorities of the Trafford Together Locality Plan and strategic direction set by the Trafford Locality Board – In summary it is responsible for delivery of the Locality Plan. It will work in partnership to deliver high quality, safe services at the right time and in the right place, shaping and co-designing services to ensure the maximisation of Trafford's resources.

Acting in an advisory function to the Trafford Provider Collaborative and Trafford Locality Board, the Trafford Clinical and Practitioner Senate will provide a single point of clinical and practitioner oversight of community-based health and care provision across Trafford, with involvement in the design, planning and delivery functions of the provider collaborative arrangements. It will support the development of clinical pathways and pathway/service redesign, providing evidence-based advice and guidance, working across organisational boundaries to promote a whole system approach. It will make recommendations and supports service change, stand-up and pathway redesign through into the Trafford Provider Collaborative for onward approval.

CIPFA SOLACE Principle C	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Plan • Core Strategy • Trafford Locality Plan • Physical Activity Vision • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Trafford Recovery Plan • Investment Management Strategy
How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2021/22	
<p>The Corporate Plan, ‘Our Trafford, Our Future,’ was refreshed for 2021-2024 following input from residents, staff and Elected Members including 400 contributions to an online survey. The refreshed priorities were approved at Council in November 2021.</p> <p>Our Trafford, Our Future describes Trafford Council’s strategic vision, outcomes and priorities for the borough, with the priorities being key to its delivery. It includes an overview of what the council will do and how we will work with our residents, communities, businesses and partners to deliver change.</p> <p>The refresh sets out the most critical things that we need to do over the coming years to recover from COVID-19, deliver public services and collaborate with communities, businesses and partners. This plan reflects the ambition of Trafford’s leadership and the values and aims of the Council to provide a blueprint for improving Trafford. It will shape the activity within the council, help prioritise resources and monitor progress made, as well as aligning with strategic financial planning.</p> <p>It is intended as a guide for our partner organisations to help identify shared objectives so we can work together more effectively to achieve far more for Trafford than we ever could working alone.</p> <p>The three key outcomes are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All our residents will have access to quality learning, training and jobs 2. All our communities will be happy, healthy and safe 3. All our businesses and town centres will be supported to recover and flourish for the benefit of everyone <p>The refreshed priorities for 2021-2024 are described as ‘better health, better jobs, greener future’ as outlined below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reducing Health Inequalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Working with people, communities and partners, particularly in deprived areas, to improve the physical and mental health of our residents.</i> 	

2. Supporting people out of poverty

- o *Tackling the root causes to prevent people from falling into poverty and raising people out of it.*

3. Addressing our Climate Crisis

- o *Leading the way in our region's response, reducing our carbon footprint and tackling the impact of climate change.*

The Corporate Plan is reported on a quarterly basis to the Executive and the Corporate Leadership Team. Key performance indicators are monitor outcomes related to the three priorities and council services. The indicators cover a number of economic, social and environmental measures including, but not limited to, housing completions, affordable housing, healthy life expectancy, apprenticeships, waste/recycling, residential / nursing care, homelessness, planning applications and council tax collected. The Annual report on the Corporate Plan went to the Executive on the [20th of June 2022](#).

The performance framework is inherent in everything done within the Council and supports improvement, delivery, and effective decision making. The 'golden thread' of the performance framework ensures that work across all directorates is aligned. GM and National priorities are built into the Corporate Plan which then feed down to service, team and individual plans.

The Authority has spent its resources within the overall agreed budget for the financial year 2021/22 with a small underspend of £1.53m. Whilst the continuation of the pandemic in 2021/22 resulted in further additional expenditure and pressures on income streams, additional funding was provided to offset some of this impact. Further financial support for Adult Social Care was received from the NHS via Trafford CCG to support hospital discharges but also more specific adult social care functions. However, the Hospital Discharge Programme Funding ceased on 31 March 2022.

The Authority approved its budget for 2022/23 at the Full Council Meeting on 16 February 2022. Due to increasing cost pressures on Adult Social Care, the Council Tax recommendation resulted in a specific 1% increase to be implemented to finance expenditure in this area and a 1.99% Council Tax increase for general services. The additional funding generated from these increases was £3.38m and helped bridge a budget gap of £20.14m; the balance met from savings and income proposals of £5.32m and £11.43m of reserves.

The Director of Finance and Systems made it clear in the budget report that whilst the proposals set out in the report can secure a robust budget for 2022/23; the use

of reserves is not sustainable beyond 2022/23 and reserves cannot be used to avoid the requirement for permanent savings. It is therefore imperative that the Council embarks on a bold and ambitious Innovation and Change Programme and invests in further transformational delivery of our services.

The Council first adopted its Investment Strategy in 2017, and it has been updated on a number of occasions since to ensure that it aligns with our strategic priorities and remains compliant with regulations. The revised strategy was approved by Council in February 2022, along with the annual budget and capital strategy. The investment strategy is used to support key regeneration priorities, including the redevelopment of Stretford Mall, Altrincham Stamford Quarter and the former Sale Magistrates Court site. All investment opportunities are subject to approval by the cross-party Investment Management Board, based on advice from external advisers working alongside Council staff.

Trafford's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2029 includes an objective to reduce the number of people in the borough who are physically inactive. We have an ongoing improvement programme for our leisure centres, but we recognise that many people do not wish to take part in formal or buildings-based sporting activities. We are therefore also working to improve other leisure facilities such as our parks, river and canal ways and other public spaces. We are also developing a walking and cycling strategy to increase the number of people using active travel methods, and improving the safety and the quality of these. We are working closely with Transport for Greater Manchester to develop safer routes, linking into the Bee Network.

The Trafford Together Locality Plan (2019/2024) was refreshed in November 2021 to reflect the legacy of good partnership working practices, values and behaviours by system leaders, teams and individuals that enabled the Council and its partners to deliver, to the best of our ability, services in response to the pandemic.

The Trafford Locality Plan and subsequent 2021 refresh sit alongside the Trafford Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019/2029 which exists to improve population health outcomes. They seek to achieve this through strategy development, improving partnership working, and using our collective knowledge of local needs from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to improve our services.

The revised and updated plan retains the CCG/NHS GM (Trafford) and partners overarching aspirations to work together to help achieve:

- Better lives for our most vulnerable people
- Better wellbeing for our population
- Better connections throughout our communities.

This plan has been developed to support recovery within the Health and Social Care system, whilst maintaining the emphasis on reducing inequality, and provides an anchor for the development of the new national Health and Social Care System.	
CIPFA SOLACE Principle D	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernisation Programme • Corporate Plan • Medium Term Financial Plan • Efficiency Plan • Capital Investment Programme • Social Value Framework • Equality Strategy • Children’s Services Improvement Plan
How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2021/22	
<p>The Executive in September 2021 agreed a revised capital investment programme (excluding investment funds) of £48.99m for 2021/22 and achieved an end of year spend of £27.07m. The major areas of investment included school improvements, children’s social care, adult social services, maintaining public buildings, regeneration projects, highways schemes, leisure facilities, greenspaces, and ICT improvements. During the year the Council progressed proposals for a revised leisure strategy, completing consultation for Altrincham Leisure centre, and developing proposals for Sale and Stretford. A Capital Programme Board made up of officers from across all service areas has been established for 2022/23 with the intention of improving both project management and delivery of the council’s capital priorities.</p> <p>The joint Corporate Equality Strategy for 2021 to 2025 demonstrates our commitment to improve equality of opportunity for our residents, colleagues and partners with a focus on the four objectives outlined below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Equality Objective 1: Inclusive and Informed Leadership 2. Equality Objective 2: Improving our Workforce Data Collection and improving the representativeness of our workforce 3. Equality Objective 3: Reducing Health Inequalities 4. Equality Objective 4: Reducing Hate Crime <p>Progress is monitored against the objectives and the Equality Steering and Working Groups continue to meet regularly to ensure sound governance and delivery of the Equality Strategy Action Plan. The four staff forums (BAME, LGBT+, Carers and Disability forums) meet regularly with notable examples of initiatives being developed because of direct feedback. Collaboration with service leads across the Council and</p>	

learning from the experiences of key staff groups continues to inform progress. Data on service usage is collected and analysed to identify any systematic inequalities, with steps taken to reduce these for example, the Public Health and Community engagement teams worked together to identify areas and groups with low uptake of covid vaccination, and then designed targeted work to address these inequalities. We are making satisfactory progress in meeting our published Equality Objectives and an independent review and survey was undertaken in 2021/22 with an 88% full completion rate that will also support the direction of the working group.

Reports on the key performance indicators agreed in relation to the corporate plan continue to be delivered to both the Executive and CLT to monitor progress and outcomes achieved. Directorate Plans set out the strategic direction for each key area of the Council and are reviewed annually. The plans demonstrate how each service will contribute towards the delivery of the Corporate Plan, service improvements and other strategies.

A dashboard of the three corporate priorities measures has been prepared and can be accessed on the Trafford Data Lab website:

<https://trafforddatalab.shinyapps.io/corporate-plan/>.

The dashboard visualises a range of indicators relating to each of the three strategic priorities. These show trend data for Trafford compared to the average of other similar Local Authorities (in terms of statistical characteristics) and, where possible, to England.

The Modernisation Programme continues to work with services to look at the way we can deliver services by improving efficiency and reducing spending where possible, as well as working to support the delivery of our digital strategy.

Programme management support is provided to the Finance and Change Board, the Strategic Delivery Group and other significant programmes of work to ensure activity is coordinated, actions are completed, and risks and issues monitored. Governance arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose and that risks and issues are escalated as appropriate to CLT.

CIPFA SOLACE Principle E	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<p>Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People Strategy • Member Development Strategy • Members’ Training Plan • EPIC management programme • Members’ Induction Process • Employee Training & Development Plan • Corporate Induction Procedure • EPIC check in process • Staff Health & Wellbeing Strategy
<p>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2021/22</p>	
<p>The People Strategy was co-designed with our workforce and launched in 2020. The strategy focuses on four key priorities that support the employee journey to attract, recruit and retain a continuous pipeline of talent.</p> <p>Trafford continued to work towards the priorities and objectives outlined in the strategy throughout 2021/22. The work progressed alongside the ongoing response to the pandemic to ensure the workforce was kept safe. A big focus during the year was considering the future model for where and how staff work. Learning was taken from the enforced home working during the pandemic. The Council’s approach has been aligned with the EPIC values (Empower, People Centred, Inclusive, Collaborate) with staff being involved throughout the process, which included input from EPIC Pioneers, staff networks, and unions. The Council has adopted ‘Trafford Smart Working’ which takes a ‘hybrid by default’ approach. The approach empowers relevant services to decide which roles will utilise hybrid working and how much time staff will spend in the office or working remotely. Teams have been encouraged to discuss what works best for them and service users. Resources to support managers and teams to work in this different way have been developed and will continue to be reviewed as the policies are embedded into practice.</p> <p>Plans are in place to launch the second employee engagement survey with best companies in June 2022, the outputs which will help shape the people priorities and the refresh of the people strategy in 2022/23.</p> <p>The council’s EPIC Manager programme has continued to be delivered virtually and is on the 20th cohort. The programme contains four core modules, “being your best, vital conversations, teams- being your best and health and wellbeing”. The modules are regularly reviewed to ensure that the content is up-to-date and reflects the Council’s priorities. Most recently, the health and wellbeing module has undergone a complete refresh to reflect the current global economic and environmental challenges individuals and organisations face, such as financial wellbeing challenges. It also explores areas of health and wellbeing that reflect the move into a hybrid working</p>	

model, such as digital wellbeing. There are also three “learning circles” facilitated during the programme, which allow managers to bring their real-world management problems to the group for peer support and learning, using an action learning approach.

Optional modules are offered to support managers’ personal development, including “values-based recruitment, psychology of change, and MiTrent for managers”. The learning offer to colleagues is under continual development and in 21/22 added “managing by outcomes”, a module focused on a coaching management style that values outcomes that support service and organisational priorities alongside “Managing Fixed Term Contracts”, which supported managers to understand the process for fairly exiting and supporting colleagues on a fixed term contract.

Job specific training is offered as standard to the workforce to support them to develop in their current role and with their career aspirations. In 2021/2022 176 training events were delivered with 1236 colleagues accessing this formal training. Interview skills training is provided to support career development and training on managing personal change is available to support colleagues experiencing significant changes within their working environment. Trafford’s wider learning offer is supported through the e-learning platform called MeLearning. Through the MeLearning platform colleagues have access to over 200 e-learning modules, which supports the delivery of corporate mandatory training including General Data Protection and information security training. The platform is also used to deliver job specific training such as food hygiene and an introduction to liquid logic as well as developmental courses. During 2021/2022 the MeLearning platform has been utilised by community hub volunteers to access the required learning to help support Trafford residents.

The EPIC Check in sessions continued to be delivered virtually to managers and colleagues throughout 2021/2022 with emphasis on wellbeing and wellbeing conversations during the final lockdowns and transition to new ways of working. HR continue to review the check in process and paperwork to make sure it supports managers and colleagues to have engaging conversations. With the updated corporate priorities and branding HR took the opportunity to conduct a mini review and update the paperwork to reflect current best practice and feedback. The updated paperwork will be available to all colleagues and managers in 2022/23.

During the year the LEAP into leadership programme has been introduced to support first line and aspiring managers. The programme has been designed in partnership with Salford College and is aimed at new/aspiring managers. Taking 18 months to complete, in addition to developing new skills and enhancing existing ones, colleagues are awarded the Level 3 Team Leader apprenticeship and an Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM qualification).

Over 2021/2022 HR significantly developed the Health and Wellbeing pages on the Council's intranet, providing a range of tools, guidance and support to colleagues in various areas e.g. working from home, digital wellbeing, physical wellbeing. Over the winter months a colleague engagement campaign was run to support the workforce to look after their own wellbeing and check-in on colleagues. This consisted of different themes over the months of December through to February which covered physical, mental and financial wellbeing, with new resources being added to the intranet. HR also worked with partner organisations to deliver Lunch and Learn sessions on topics including seasonal affective disorder, financial wellbeing and learning to love yourself. Some staff stories were shared to encourage storytelling and sharing of coping strategies, including a video of a colleague talking about his mental health experience and a story from a colleague about their hidden disabilities and the support they received from attending our Staff Disability Group.

In response to the recent cost of living crisis, HR have focused upon developing financial wellbeing information and support. The Council's intranet pages have been reviewed to provide clearer signposting to staff benefits and savings schemes, general financial support, top tips and advice on managing debt. A section on mental health and information was also included reminding colleagues of the importance to talk about any financial worries. HR have signposted staff to the internal Trafford Services including the Welfare Rights team and will be working with them on a lunch and learn session for colleagues.

The network of Mental Health First Aiders has continued to grow and a further cohort has been trained. The network has supported colleagues by providing 'tea and talk' sessions, alongside a programme of activity linking to several national health and wellbeing campaigns e.g. Mental Health Awareness week.

The newly formed staff-led Active Travel Group meet to encourage and enable more active and sustainable travel. An Active Travel Survey was developed by the group to understand more about the barriers and enablers to active travel among the workforce. The group has been involved in promoting the changing rooms and shower facilities at the Council's main office buildings and organising a range of activities during Active Travel Week including stalls, guided walks and cycles, bike maintenance and bike training sessions.

A wide programme of learning has been delivered to Members, using internal and external resources. This programme reflected members' development needs, corporate priorities, and practical skills. Some examples of courses attended to address these core themes are Inclusive Leader, Carbon Emergency, and Values Based Recruitment. An induction programme was delivered for all new members over May and June 2021 with a focus upon providing a warm welcome to Trafford.

<p>The Member Development Steering Group continues to meet on a regular basis to inform and shape areas for development and are reviewing our approach to induction with their support, ready for the elections in the following year.</p>	
<p>CIPFA SOLACE Principle F</p>	<p>Key Elements of Trafford Framework</p>
<p>Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Procedure Rules • Contract Procedure Rules • Treasury Management Strategy • Scrutiny Committees and Protocols • Risk Management Strategy & Policy Statement • Strategic Risk Register • Internal Audit Strategy • Accounts & Audit Committee
<p>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2021/22</p>	
<p>The Council continues to regularly review and monitor its Strategic Risk Register with update reports presented to the CLT and the Accounts and Audit Committee.</p> <p>By the end of the year, the highest risk in the register related to uncertainty over the Council's medium term financial position. Other high risks included managing the impact of disruption caused by COVID-19; the climate change emergency; risks in relation to information governance; dealing with increase demand for school places; the performance of the One Trafford Partnership; risks in relation to delivering Leisure Services across the Borough and risks in relation to the economic impact of Brexit and COVID-19. The strategic risk reports highlighted responsibilities and ongoing actions to manage the risks identified.</p> <p>The Internal Audit 2021/22 work plan incorporated coverage of several key financial systems and other business risks. Updates of work undertaken were provided to the Corporate Leadership Team and the Accounts and Audit Committee during the year. The Annual Report of the Head of Internal Audit for 2021/22 stated that "Planned internal audit work has been subject to some changes during 2021/22 due to the impact of the pandemic across the Council. There has, however, continued to be a range of internal audit work undertaken during the year across each of the main areas of the Internal Audit Plan, which enables an audit opinion to be given".</p> <p>The report also stated that "For most audit reviews undertaken, at least reasonable levels of assurance have been gained that the systems, procedures and controls in place to manage risks and deliver objectives are operating to a satisfactory standard. Follow-up internal audit work in areas previously reviewed demonstrates that progress is continuing to be made to improve controls and address risks previously identified, although further action is required in respect of some areas reviewed. Where areas for improvement have been identified during 2021/22, actions have been agreed with management to be followed up in 2022/23.</p>	

Given the above, based on assurance gathered during 2021/22, the Internal Audit Opinion is that, overall, a reasonable level of assurance can be given that the control environment encompassing internal control, risk management and governance, is operating to a satisfactory standard.”

As the Council’s External Auditors (appointed to audit the accounts of Trafford Council for five years, for the accounts from 2018/19 to 2022/23) Mazars LLP provided regular updates to the [Accounts and Audit Committee](#) through the year including details of its planned work and findings.

Trafford’s legal team, in conjunction with representatives from the legal teams from the other STAR Councils, and STAR Procurement, worked over for 18 months to complete a robust and substantial review of the Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs). The new CPRs were agreed by all four of the legal teams at each of the STAR Authorities.

All STAR authorities reached final agreement on the proposed CPRs and progressed them through their governance procedures to adopt the amended CPRs into their constitutions. Within Trafford this process included submission to the Standards Committee, Scrutiny Committee, and Executive for approval before being submitted to [Council on the 23rd March 2022](#) for final approval and adoption.

Trafford Conducted an in-depth review of the Scrutiny Function during the year. The main review was conducted by a cross party working group with support from Governance Services. To ensure that the review was unbiased Trafford Commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to perform an independent review, the outcomes of which fed into the main review. A final report was submitted to the [Council meeting on the 23rd of March 2022](#) which contained 18 proposals to be introduced over the next two years.

CIPFA SOLACE Principle G	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<p>Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Website • Freedom of Information Publication scheme • Trafford Data Lab • Marketing and Communications Team • Annual Financial Statements • Annual Governance Statement • Annual Scrutiny Report • Corporate Plan
<p>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2021/22</p>	

Information on the Council's decision making is open and transparent and continues to be published on the website. This includes publishing open data through the Council's website, data.gov.uk and the Trafford Data Lab's website (trafforddatalab.io). Improvements continue to be made to the scope and quality of information the Council publishes via digital channels. All new content is assessed against a set of principles that define and shape good quality digital content.

During 2021/22 Trafford Council's Communications and Marketing Team delivered key messages to residents, businesses, and other key stakeholders about how the Council was handling the Covid pandemic. This included key communications centred around the vaccination programme, the implementation and delivery of test and trace, the safe opening of Trafford's schools, the economy, and a return to a more normal form of social life.

The transparency of communications was ensured by using plain English so the messages to all residents and other key stakeholders were easily understood. Communications were also relevant and timely especially important given all the changes to Covid rules. The team worked closely with the Council's key stakeholders in both the public and private sector.

The Council's Communication Strategy was updated to reflect the new visions and corporate priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan. Plans were developed to make sure these are communicated to all the organisation's stakeholders. Monitoring of the Communications and Marketing team's performance was conducted through monthly reports to senior management and the Executive.

The External Auditor's Annual Report 2020/21 was presented to the Accounts and Audit Committee by Mazars in February 2022. The report from Mazars confirmed that an unqualified opinion was given on the financial statements for 2020/21. It was noted that the draft accounts provided to the Auditor were of a good quality and were supported by good quality working papers. A small number of opportunities were identified from the audit to improve internal control and management agreed to address these recommendations in 2021/22.

In respect of the assessment of value for money arrangements, the External Auditor's Annual Report acknowledged actions being taken to address the challenges to the Council's financial position. In respect of the value for money assessment, one area of significant risk was highlighted in respect of issues originally raised from the Ofsted report issued in May 2019 on Children's Social Care. It was noted that the Council is continuing its efforts to improve the service and ensure all the issues identified by Ofsted are addressed.

Findings from the 2021/22 external audit will be reported to the Accounts and Audit Committee later in 2022.

The corporate plan continues to describe the Council's overall approach and outlines the Trafford vision. Quarterly reports on the Council's Performance against the Corporate Plan are provided to Executive, which include a written report plus a brochure that utilises qualitative data and case studies to outline achievements during the quarter. The reports are available on the Council website.

The corporate plan and delivery is based on key priorities and objectives and helps to measure the right things at the right time. It is used to continually improve how the Council and its partners work together and the way services are delivered and are performance managed. The plan is based on the quality and accuracy of current and forecasted information which produces meaningful measures of how partners and services are performing. This ensures the Council provides value for money and prioritises resources sufficiently.

Each service is responsible for delivery of its service plan which contributes to the wider corporate plan and is reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team, Directors and senior managers with input from all teams. This ensures accountability, transparency and good practices are in place.

The Trafford Data Lab is a datastore which grants access to a wide range of statistical data and visualisations about Trafford, sourced both from the council and central government. This includes a public-facing webpage encompassing interactive web apps, and a set of 'charticles' that give an overview of some of the most useful graphs tracking local trends. The COVID-19 tracker has been a particular recent success in the past two years. It has a user-friendly overview of cases across the UK, as well as granular detail about each area of the Trafford district. Filters such as 7-day rolling averages give useful insights into trends around the disease.

A wide range of data sets are available on the website, such as care homes and defibrillator locations. These data sets are designed for use by residents and data professionals alike. The emphasis is on transparency and reproducibility of the data and generally datasets published comply with the Local Government Transparency Code.

4. Review of effectiveness

4.1 Trafford Council's Corporate Governance Code sets out the Authority's responsibility to undertake a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework on an annual basis. The review is informed by the work of the Council's executive managers, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report, by the external auditor's comments, and the results of reviews and inspections.

4.2 The processes applied, the sources of assurance obtained in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of governance arrangements, and, as part of that, the systems of internal control include the following:

Management Controls	Independent Assurance	External Assurance
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Management• Programme Management• Performance Management• Risk Management• Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal Audit• Scrutiny• Health & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• External Audit• Other inspectorate e.g. OSTED, CQC• Sector led improvement e.g. LGA

4.3 These governance functions are described in more detail within the Council's Corporate Governance Code and specific assurances or improvements delivered during 2021/22 are detailed in Sections 3 and 5 of this Statement.

4.4 The review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Accounts and Audit Committee concluded that the arrangements continue to be fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework. The areas which have been addressed and those which are to be addressed with new actions are set out in Section 5.

5. Significant Governance issues

- 5.1 The Council takes its responsibilities and duties seriously with regard to ensuring continuous improvement in the way that its functions are exercised and in the consideration of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 5.2 In the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement a number of significant governance issues were identified. Below are the details of those significant governance issues followed by the action that the Council has taken in 2021/22 to address them.

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<p>Continued impact of COVID - The Council is continuing to work to the GM Pandemic Strategic Response Plan in preparing a coordinated response to the COVID-19 outbreaks in Trafford. The governance arrangements have been set up with the Recovery Coordinating Group Chaired by the Chief Executive of the Two boards are in place. A Health Protection Board, chaired by the Director of Public Health and a Public Engagement Board, now chaired by the Executive Member for Covid-19 Recovery and Reform</p> <p>Six Silver level thematic groups are meeting bi-weekly chaired by Corporate Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults Health and Social Care, Chaired by the Corporate Director of Adult Services • Children’s Health and Social Care and Education Chaired by the Corporate Director of Children’s Services • Infrastructure & Economy – Chaired by the Corporate Director of Place • Infrastructure, Environment and Physical Activity – Chaired by The Corporate Director of Place 	<p>The arrangement established in 20/21 for the management of the pandemic continued and were further refined through 21/22. The final quarter of the year was spent in planning recovery and ensuring a safe return to offices and BAU.</p> <p>The Council continued to work to the GM Pandemic Strategic Response Plan in delivering a coordinated response to the COVID-19 outbreaks in Trafford. The Recovery Coordinating Group Chaired by the Chief Executive continued to act as Gold Command, with a Health Protection Board, chaired by the Director of Public Health and a Public Engagement Board, chaired by the Executive Member for Covid-19 Recovery and Reform supporting this, as required in the national guidance.</p> <p>Six Silver level thematic groups were established, chaired by Corporate Directors. These met with varying frequency, depending on need and activity levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults Health and Social Care, Chaired by the Corporate Director of Adult Services

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing Digital and Modernisation - Chaired by the Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources • Resourcing – Chaired by the Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources <p>Terms of reference have been established for all the groups with the key areas that each group will oversee and provide assurance that these critical areas are being addressed. A number of sub groups / and time limited task groups have been established.</p> <p>The silver groups report monthly on progress and risk management. The frequency of meetings and reporting is monitored regularly.</p> <p>Additional resources have also been recruited to support the delivery of the recovery activity; reporting through The Health Protection Board</p> <p>There has been an ongoing communication programme for residents, staff and partners. New HR arrangements have been issued to staff to facilitate home working. ICT capacity has been enhanced through an increase in VPN licences. Directorates have updated their business continuity plans to focus on critical services. Major changes have been implemented to working practices to ensure that all staff whose job role allows them to work from home are able to do so. A range of programmes to support residents and businesses to mitigate economic impact have been introduced.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Health and Social Care and Education Chaired by the Corporate Director of Children’s Services • Infrastructure & Economy – Chaired by the Corporate Director of Place • Infrastructure, Environment and Physical Activity – Chaired by The Corporate Director of Place • Staffing Digital and Modernisation - Chaired by the Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources • Resourcing – Chaired by the Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources <p>Terms of reference were in place for all the groups with the key areas that each group will oversee and provide assurance that these critical areas are being addressed. A number of subgroups/time limited task groups were established.</p> <p>The silver groups reported monthly on progress and risk management. The frequency of meetings and reporting is monitored regularly.</p> <p>Additional resources have also been recruited to support the delivery of the recovery activity; reporting through The Health Protection Board</p> <p>There has been an ongoing communication programme for residents, staff and partners. HR arrangements continued to facilitate home working, with major changes implemented to working practices to ensure that all staff whose job role allows them to work from home are able to do so. A range of</p>

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<p>The Health and Social Care Group has progressed both strategic and operational work providing support to Care Homes, Direct Payments services, Home Care, Drug and Alcohol services and Domestic Abuse and, training for care providers. Commissioners have sought assurance of business continuity from all service providers. The group works closely with CCG, primary care and the Trafford Local Care Organisation</p> <p>The Children’s Social Care and Health is working towards trying to secure placement stability for Looked After Children, staffing resilience for maintaining front line critical services, children’s health and wellbeing, youth justice and cohesion and advising supporting school and educational settings.</p> <p>With the current high rates of infection in Trafford and the national lockdown in place, the plans for staff returning to work have been put on hold and staff are being encouraged to work from home wherever possible.</p> <p>The vaccination programme is underway, led by the CCG, and while uptake is excellent overall, there are inequalities emerging within this, which we are working to address.</p> <p>We have also recruited a neighbourhood based community engagement team to work in localities on community engagement and behaviour change, and vaccination uptake in relation to COVID.</p> <p>Council. This acts at the gold command level.</p>	<p>programmes to support residents and businesses to mitigate economic impact were in place.</p> <p>The Health and Social Care Group continued to progress strategic and operational work providing support to Care Homes, Direct Payments services, Home Care, Drug and Alcohol services and Domestic Abuse and, training for care providers.</p> <p>Commissioners have sought assurance of business continuity from all service providers. Promoting and supporting vaccination has been a major part of the role, in particular, ensuring that all care staff legally required to be vaccinated were identified and encouraged and supported to take up vaccination. Work was also undertaken to quantify the impact of staff refusing to be vaccinated and to mitigate the impact of this. The group works closely with CCG, primary care and the Trafford Local Care Organisation</p> <p>The Children’s Social Care and Health is working towards trying to secure placement stability for Looked After Children, staffing resilience for maintaining front line critical services, children’s health and wellbeing, youth justice and cohesion and advising supporting school and educational settings.</p> <p>As the rates of infection reduced in March and the national regulations changed, work was undertaken to ensure that staff</p>

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
	<p>could return to an environment where infection risk was kept as low as possible. Staff are now encouraged to work in a hybrid manner, where their job plans allow.</p> <p>The vaccination programme continued throughout the year, led by the CCG, and while uptake is excellent overall, there are inequalities within this, which we continued to work to address.</p> <p>The neighbourhood based community engagement team continued to work in localities on community engagement and behaviour change, and vaccination uptake in relation to COVID.</p> <p>Covid continues to pose a threat to Trafford, both through its impact on widening inequalities and worsening population health, but also from the danger of further waves or a vaccine resistant variant emerging. Plans are in place to manage or mitigate the risks from a recurrence of a more virulent strain aspects but for now the focus is on recovery.</p>
<p>Climate Change Emergency - The Council has an adopted climate change framework and action plan, and an agreed governance arrangement to oversee the Borough wide response to becoming carbon neutral. Central to this is the climate change and air quality commission which was established in 2021. An independent chair of the commission has recently been appointed and the work plan will be developed during the year. A business engagement group is to be established to co-ordinate activity and drive change across our business sector, and a citizen's panel will be established later in the year.</p>	<p>The Council has taken action in 2021/22 to address the climate change emergency, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The award of £4m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funds across 14 sites with installation of Heat Pumps, Solar Panels and improved lighting expected to save 527 tonnes CO2. • 3.68 hectares of woodland (9,200 trees) planted through Yr 1 of the Trees for Climate in Trafford in conjunction with City of Trees and registered as part of The Woodland Carbon Code.

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The launch of Authority Based Insetting that will encourage local businesses to invest in local carbon reduction schemes • The Initiation of a Local Area Energy Plan that will provide a blueprint for decarbonisation across the borough • A Citizens Assembly event was held in November 2021, to assist preparation for a citizen assembly in 2022. • Working in partnership with Greater Manchester on the GM 'Go Neutral' project looking at smart energy and nature recovery opportunities across Trafford. • The approval of an approach to accelerate installation of EV charging points, with a private sector partner • Commissioned two studies looking at opportunities to deliver a 'green' and low carbon Trafford Park <p>A dashboard of measures have been identified to monitor performance, and these are publicly available: https://trafforddatalab.shinyapps.io/corporate-plan/.</p> <p>Despite areas of good progress, there is a need to accelerate delivery of the carbon neutral action plan, working with the climate change and air quality commission. In February 2022 only 42% of actions in the plan were on track, with 12% at risk and 25% behind.</p>
<p>Financial Management and the Medium Term Financial Position - There remain future challenges to the Council's financial resilience caused by 11 years of funding reductions, the uncertainty around structural changes to local government finance, namely the Fair Funding Review, Business Rate</p>	<p>Regular budget monitoring reports have been provided to the Executive and Accounts and Audit Committee throughout the course of the year. Whilst there was a small budget underspend of £1.53m at year end this was only achieved</p>

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<p>Retention and social care financing. The ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic are still not fully known and the impact of Brexit will be something that will impact on our financial planning going forward. Future levels of Government support are unclear and whilst they will be informed by the Comprehensive Spending Review this will not be until later in the financial year, so planning future year's budget scenarios will be a challenge. An added pressure in year will be the capacity of the Council to deliver against its ambitious savings and income target required to balance the budget during 2021/22 given the pressures on the workforce as it recovers from the impact of the response and recovery from Covid-19.</p> <p>In terms of financial management standards, the Council is in the process of reviewing conformance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code, including confirming any actions for further development. At this stage, whilst it is considered that there is considerable conformance with the Code, actions identified include further embedding regular performance updates on the Council's joint venture vehicles and further development of asset management planning to inform the Capital Strategy.</p>	<p>through a combination of management actions, most notably around vacancy management.</p> <p>There are underlying pressures across demand led social care services, continuing impacts of the Covid Pandemic on the Council's income streams and challenges in maintaining the budgeted levels of income from the Investment Strategy. The impact of the cost of living crisis felt by Trafford residents and the impact of inflation across all budget areas will mean that the challenges on the Council's budget for 2022/23 and later years will be compounded.</p> <p>A full review of financial management arrangements across the Council has been undertaken which has demonstrated compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code. An action plan has been developed to improve arrangements in a small number of areas.</p>
<p><u>Records Management:</u></p> <p>A gap analysis review of the Council's record management position has been undertaken with a view to identifying work streams and potential solutions. A significant review is required to address both the handling of e-records and paper based records in line with the Council's retention schedule.</p>	<p><u>Records Management:</u></p> <p>A preliminary gap analysis report has been compiled setting out recommended strategies around the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retention Schedule: Commit to an update of current subscription OR commence work internally on producing a bespoke Trafford Council records and retention schedule OR commission an external records

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<p><u>Subject Access Requests (SAR):</u></p> <p>Although significant progress has been made in tackling historic backlogs, which was commended by the ICO, there continues to be year on year increases in the number of SAR requests made.</p> <p>As of October 2022, the Council's backlog of SAR cases consists of 22 active cases, where 4 cases still remain within the 1 month deadline and with an average of 10 SAR cases being processed by the IG team per month. However from February 2022 until October 2022, the number of SAR cases that have exceeded the statutory response timescale has increased to 30 cases. A contributing factor to this increase is due to the current lack of staffing resource within the IG team.</p> <p>Since February 2022 the ICO have received a number of complaints regarding the Council's handling of SARs. As a result of those complaints the ICO will monitor the Council's progress going forward with the potential imposition of a Notice of Undertaking or monetary penalty if the Council does not improve .</p> <p><u>Freedom of Information (FOI) / Environmental Information Regulations (EIR):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The average compliance rate to date has been steadily increasing month by month from 41% in September 2021, reaching a rate of 65% (responded to within 20 working days) in January 2022. The current rate at October 2022, is 71%. The target compliance rate (and ICO expectation) is 90%. 	<p>management expert to producing a bespoke Trafford Council records and retention schedule.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offsite Storage: The Council's current offsite storage contract has been reviewed and a re-tendering exercise has been initiated to ensure VfM and attainment of fiduciary duties. - Hard Copy Files: An assessment of the Council's handling and storage of hard copy records had been underway but was paused as a result of the pandemic. The pandemic has altered the way in which employees are working. A further assessment will now be undertaken to explore the position and present recommendations around data cleansing and hard copy protocols. - Email management: recommendations regarding email management is being developed alongside IT colleagues. <p><u>Subject Access Requests (SAR):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work is continuing to improve SAR processes with an emphasis of improving active processing - Automation and focused processing of requests to be investigated. <p><u>Freedom of Information (FOI) / Environmental Information Regulations (EIR):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identified actions: Targeted collaboration with teams where delays are being experienced; Rota system

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<p><u>Data Breaches:</u></p> <p>Position Statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between February 2022 and October 2022, the Information Governance Team has received reports of reports of 52 data breach incidents for investigation. (Avg: 6 a month). The average per month remains consistent when compared with data from the previous year • The most common types of data breach are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Email sent in error to wrong recipient. - Letter posted to wrong recipient. - Error in redaction of information. - Excessive information shared with professionals by email. - Documents left on office printers. - Documents lost to theft/burglary at employees home. - Lost information. - IT system glitches. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The majority of the cases logged at Severity level 1 & 2 were found to have risks mitigated through appropriate and timely measures taken and no risks were posed to the rights and freedom of affected individuals. <p><u>Data Security Protection Toolkit</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This an annual piece of work that requires the Council to demonstrate that it is fully compliant with the minimum data protection standards in order to access and process information from NHS Digital. • This piece of work requires significant resource from both IG and ICT. Moreover, it requires the Council to corporately demonstrate commitment in areas such as data protection training and cyber security. 	<p>implemented across the IG team to improve processing; Reporting mechanisms reviewed.</p> <p><u>Data Breaches:</u></p> <p>The Data Protection Officer supported by the SIRO is leading an ongoing review to improve processing and awareness of data incidents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interim processes which have already been embedded across the IG Service are being developed further to determine more substantive permanent mechanisms of reporting, - Incident reviews and decision making across the process: - Rota system implemented across the IG team to allocate new data incidents. Enables more serious incidents to be progressed on an urgent basis. This too ensures that Incidents are allocated promptly for investigation. - There remains a risk from delayed oversight of data incidents, poor quality reporting and lack of accountability for reporting and recommendation implementation - As previously identified by internal audit the biggest issue to be addressed is “Squaring the circle” and ensuring that the IG Team’s recommendations are fully implemented – work ongoing to identify solutions: - Recommendations are being reviewed to ensure that they are both practical and effective and to ensure that implementation and success can be measured - Recommendations will be reviewed to ensure that they are tailored to common types of breaches. The common types of breaches have been evolved somewhat as a result of the pandemic and remote working

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our last submission was June 2022 and there are areas where the Council did not meet the minimum standards as identified by our Internal Auditors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A system to capture data around data incidents is now in place which will inform smarter reporting and increase transparency: - There is a correlation between training take up and number of breaches originating from specific areas. - Actions are being developed to secure commitment from the senior levels across target Directorates to ensure that data protection training is made a priority within agreed timescales. - Corporate Directors and Service Directors to be notified of all breaches and recommendations provided by IG team, as part of an ongoing process to reduce the number of incidents. <p>Together, the above issues raise the following risks – legal/regulatory (non-compliance with legal requirements), reputational, financial, adverse publicity.</p> <p><u>Data Security Protection Toolkit</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This an annual piece of work that requires the Council to demonstrate that it is fully compliant with the minimum data protection standards in order to access and process information from NHS Digital. - This piece of work requires significant resource from both IG and ICT. Moreover, it requires the Council to corporately demonstrate commitment in areas such as data protection training, records management and cyber security.

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our last submission was in June 2022 and there are a number of areas where the Council did not fully meet the standards as identified by our Internal Auditors. - The IG team will be rolling out a robust improvement plan for addressing each of the areas identified by internal audit where there have been shortcomings with a deadline for compliance being March 2023 in time for the final audit prior to the next DSPT Toolkit submission.
<p>Amey Contract - The Council will continue to actively manage the Amey contract within the performance management framework and contractual mechanisms available. The Council will conclude the seven-year review, setting out a new contractual relationship and performance framework for the second half of the contract</p>	<p>The contract has continued to be managed through the performance management framework, resulting in a level of deductions adding to over £200k for issues primarily in the waste areas. Issues through COVID continue to be managed and staff levels are being monitored closely in a very tight labour market.</p> <p>The seven-year review is continuing to be negotiated. Trafford have sent a request to Amey detailing the areas to be looked at in detail including Waste, Customer Service, Decarbonisation, Highways, Capital Spend and Behaviour. A submission has been received from Amey which will be reviewed, and negotiations will conclude before the end of the year.</p>
<p>Leisure Services - Trafford Council have appointed to the new position of Head of Leisure. This role will give additional resource and strategic focus to ensure the Investment Programme is aligned to the updated Physical Activity Strategy. They will be responsible for the Contract Management of Trafford Leisure CiC</p>	<p>The new contract and Operating Agreement between Trafford Council and Trafford Leisure has started to be developed via a number of workshops which has produced a significant number of actions to be resolved including the development of new leases for Trafford Leisure to operate across the Trafford Estate starting with the completed refurbishment of Urmston.</p>

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<p>A new contract and Operating Agreement between Trafford Council and Trafford Leisure CiC will be developed and implemented to ensure the services are aligned to delivery of the outcomes identified through Trafford's Strategic Outcomes Planning Model which was commissioned via Sport England.</p> <p>The Terms of Reference for Trafford Council Leisure Board will be reviewed to ensure improved governance of the Leisure Investment Programme and other leisure related projects.</p> <p>The Council and Trafford Leisure are working on a financial plan to the end of this fiscal year but there are so many unknowns at present. Trafford Council made an application to the National Leisure Recovery Fund for the £570,000 which was successful and was transferred to support Trafford Leisure. 30% allocated to cover cost incurred from December 20 to March 21 and the other 70% to assist with reopening from May 21. Customers have started to return and direct debit have continued for some services but the cost base has been kept artificially low due to furlough. Now that furlough is starting to end and employees are being requested to return there is now a significant increase in resignations and whilst that enables some cost savings it means there is now a new risk re lack of staff to service the potential increase in activity as the final restrictions are lifted for the Leisure sector on 19.07.21. Ongoing financial monitoring between Trafford Council and Trafford Leisure finance teams continues on a monthly basis.</p>	<p>The new Terms of Reference for Trafford Council Leisure Board have been introduced to improve the governance of the Leisure Investment Programme and all other leisure related projects. In addition, this programme and associated projects have focussed robust project management utilising PM3 (project management software).</p> <p>During the latter part of 2021/22 Trafford Leisure's P&L position improved beyond that expected in the early part of the financial year. This was due to a combination of factors including earlier easing of covid restrictions and recovery of key incomes, and particularly strong trading at Urmston LC.</p> <p>Trafford Leisure was also able to apply successfully for covid restrictions grants and utilise the Sport England grant awarded early in 2021 as part of the National Leisure Recovery Fund.</p> <p>The Council has previously set aside reserves to support Trafford Leisure's P&L which has not been required to be drawn down in 2021/22 as a result of the improved financial position as above. This has been carried forward to 2022/23 and a further £500k was added to the Council's annual base budget from April 2022 to provide further financial support over the anticipated multiyear programme of Leisure Centre refurbishments, if required.</p>

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<p>There are plans to align Trafford Leisure’s financial year with that of the Council starting with the workshops in July but at this point in time we only have 3 months trading.</p> <p>In addition, the implementation of the Investment Programme of refurbishing Altrincham, Stretford and Sale Leisure Centres had begun which will further impact income due to the on-site disruption.</p>	<p>Max Associates, a leading Leisure Industry sector consultant has been commissioned via Sport England to review the impact on Trafford Leisure's overall P&L position across their portfolio during the refurbishment programme for Altrincham, Sale and Stretford Leisure Centre's until the investments are complete circa 2025/26 and reach mature year.</p> <p>The Council is also working with Trafford Leisure becoming a real living wage employer from 2023/24, and has agreed further financial support in 2022/23 as a stepped process of working towards this objective. This will also support the ability to stabilise the workforce and protect/grow incomes during the covid recovery period and over the refurbishment programme.</p>
<p>Impact of Brexit - A report setting out the potential impact of Brexit on the Trafford economy was presented to the Council Executive on the 26th July 2021, along with an update of the economic recovery plan. The Council will implement the recommendations of the plan during the year to maintain the health of the local economy, alongside a skills programme to ensure an inclusive economic recovery.</p>	<p>A high level Transition Preparedness Plan identifying key priorities/issues for each Service area has been produced by the Transition Preparedness Group as a focus for activity going forward. The Preparedness Plan is a combination of actions and issues that are monitored and reviewed by the Group on regular basis. In light of the above, and the ongoing effects of the Covid crisis, a review of the previous Brexit Impact Assessment has been produced and a report was presented to the Council’s Executive on 26 July 2021. This report also includes an update on the Inclusive Economy Recovery Plan.</p> <p>The Trafford Inclusive Economy Recovery Plan, approved by the Council’s Executive in February 2021 complements the</p>

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
	<p>above and was produced in light of the effects of the pandemic on the economy and the need to set out key initiatives to steer the borough through recovery. The Plan has not only been set in the context of meeting key issues facing the borough, but also to be complementary to the work of the GM LEP Economic Vision and Build Back Better priorities which sets out to create a better opportunity for a strong and successful recovery.</p> <p>The Plan is a 'live' document and may be amended over time as circumstances changes and new issues arise. Meeting the challenges caused by the Covid pandemic and ensuring an effective recovery will not be easy and will require a strong partnership approach to tackle the issues facing the local economy through to recovery and beyond.</p> <p>The Plan covers the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Business Support and Sustainable Job Creation -Transition Preparedness -Green Economy and Sustainable Job Creation -Sustainable Jobs and Skills Growth for local residents -Inward Investment and Sustainable Job Creation -Funding and Growth -Strategic Sites Development and Job Creation -Improved Town Centres for Residents and Businesses -Increase Visitor Economy

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
	<p>The Transition Preparedness Group is currently inviting proposals from service leads for utilising the remaining Preparedness Funding granted to local authorities from the government. This funding can be used to support service delivery that will ensure Trafford's economy can adapt to the changes that arise through Brexit. Those proposals that are taken forward and approved by the Council will aid the delivery of the Inclusive Economy Recovery Plan.</p>
<p>Ofsted Report -Trafford Children's Services was inspected under the Inspection Local Authority Children's Service Framework in March 2019 and received an overall rating of inadequate. The sub-judgements were Requires Improvement for children in need of protection, Requires Improvement for children in care and care-leavers and Inadequate for Leadership. Following this judgement a number of actions are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Improvement Board has continued to be in place with an Independent Chair (DfE) and attended by senior politicians and senior officers from the Council and key partners. • A full and comprehensive Improvement Plan is being implemented, this is continually reviewed and updated in line with our internal findings from quality assurance • Progress towards improvement continues to be monitored by the Department for Education regularly through the Involvement of our Improvement Advisor and DfE link officer. • Most recent DfE review in May 2021 concluded that: 	<p>The Service's improvement work continues to be progressed under the auspices of the Ambitions Plan, which addresses all areas of improvement that were identified within the Inspection Local Authority Children's Service Inspection in 2019. Progress against the plan is overseen through by the Improvement Board.</p> <p>Validation of the Improvement work is provided through the formal programme of monitoring visits undertaken by Ofsted as well as the Department for Education 6 monthly reviews and through regularly through the Involvement of our Improvement Advisor and DfE link officer.</p> <p>In 2021/22 Ofsted have undertaken two monitoring visits both of which have identified that whilst there is more to be progressed there are :</p> <p>"some early signs of improvement in the quality of assessments and child protection planning for children," and</p>

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<p><i>“The service has continued to improve throughout the last six months and the council remains driven and committed to improving outcomes for the children, young people and families of Trafford”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A monthly REACT meeting continues to take place with DfE regarding LA response to vulnerable children during the Covid pandemic. Our performance relating to visits to children open to CSC, vulnerable children attending school has been consistently strong during the past several months. The DfE report that they are assured that we know our children • Ofsted have conducted a recent Assurance Visit (23 Feb – 10 March 2021) and have confirmed that they have seen progress since the 2019 inspection but that there are further improvements to ensure consistency in the quality of practice that we need to progress. Ofsted feedback was that all of the areas they found as needing to improve had already been identified by the Senior Leadership team, plans are in place to address and that there are the right plans. • Significant changes have been made to the Early Help and Children’s Social Care Front Door processes to improve timeliness and quality of decision making. Discussions are now well developed with partners about an agreed approach to Early Help. • There has been significant focus on improving Quality Assurance processes across the service and better reporting to Senior Managers. These changes are starting to inform a 	<p>“the work reviewed during this visit showed that most children’s situations were improving as a result of the intervention taking place”</p> <p>The monitoring visits undertaken at that time also noted that “The local authority has made progress to establish strong corporate governance, improved partnership working and effective systems to provide an accurate self-view. They have appropriate plans for improvement and clear ambitions and priorities and have maintained this commitment throughout the pandemic.”</p> <p>Similarly the Monitoring visit undertaken in March 2022 also confirmed “Services for children in care in Trafford have shown some improvements since the inspection in 2019. Children are regularly visited by social workers, and some assessments and plans for children in care are comprehensive and effective. Targeted strategic work is reducing delays in planning for specific cohorts of children in care. There is now an effective performance management framework in place and senior leaders are held to account by a well-informed and committed corporate parenting board.”</p> <p>These visits confirm that are improvement activity is starting to make a difference.</p> <p>Keys actions that have been progressed in this period include:</p>

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<p>better self-view of our quality of practice. There will be a focus on embedding improvements and measuring impact going forward. Ofsted noted the improvements that have been made in this area and there were assured that the information we can collate from QA processes is giving us the key information that we need to improve practice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole Service redesign is commencing with formal consultation starting on 17 March 2021. This will be significant in how we organise ourselves to deliver the right service to children at the right time in a much clearer way. The workforce have been a part of the process with engagement sessions and follow up 'show & share' sessions with staff. • During Covid-19 we have established processes to focus on keeping children safe and maintaining placement stability for our cared for children. Our 'Sit-Reps' have shown an average of 75% resilience in all services. There have been regular Incident meetings and sub-groups to ensure safe delivery of practice. We have issued new guidance to staff, initiated an extensive Work from Home programme, used a monitoring process to measure our performance and continued with key aspects of our Improvement Journey. • A strategic development partner has been appointed through a competitive tender process to further support strengthening our social care practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of a whole service redesign • The implementation of a Quality Assurance Framework to understand what the quality of service delivery is and critically to support the workforce to continue to make changes • The development of our "Investing In People Strategy" to recruit, retain, grow and sustain our work force. <p>Stability of the workforce continues to be a major priority and a focus of continued activity</p>
<p>Business Continuity - A corporate Coronavirus task and finish group has been established to identify business continuity plans</p>	<p>Work on Business Continuity Plans began in earnest once again in the Autumn of 2021 – with the creation of a dedicated</p>

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<p>to ensure services can be maintained in the event of a local outbreak. The group will monitor the national and local picture and respond to the changing position.</p> <p>As instructed by the Corporate Leadership Team, services are updating their business continuity plans. This is in the event of managing staffing shortages in particular.</p> <p>A previous internal audit review reported a number of areas for development in business continuity in relation to the following - roles and responsibilities; identification of priorities including completion of business impact analyses (BIA) to identify the impact of disruptions; co-ordinated planning including incident management, recovery and resumption plans; monitoring to ensure compliance with the agreed process and testing of plans; and to ensure adequate, accessible records are maintained.</p> <p>As reported previously, a Business Case had been approved by CLT and work has started to review the Business Continuity Management process. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, priority was given to mobilise business critical services to ensure effective business continuity and the onset of the pandemic significantly impeded progress on the completion of a comprehensive set of plans whilst also improving greater internal resilience.</p> <p>Regulatory and ICT Services have now met to review work undertaken so far, update this and pull together a revised plan for</p>	<p>project team including staff from the Greater Manchester Resilience Unit. Business Continuity Leads were identified in each service area – and initial effort was focussed on the completion of Business Impact assessments (BIA)</p> <p>In all 52 individual BIA workshops delivered by CCRU specialists were carried out and 59 BIAs were completed. Each was subsequently quality assured by CCRU and signed off by Service Leads.</p> <p>Once these were completed, they in turn informed the preparation of Business Continuity Plans – 21 Business Continuity Workshops have been held to support the process. As of November 2022, there are several, specific remaining outstanding actions. These are mostly BIAs and BCPs that were unable to be scheduled during the project’s timeframe due to the extenuating demands of the particular services involved. Each of these actions has been agreed with the respective service, have an assigned owner and an agreed timescale for completion.</p> <p>An e-learning module has been written and quality reviewed. This will be launched shortly. To assist with monitoring a series of Business Continuity Exercises are planned – with the first dealing with a major issue at Ascot House Care facility.</p>

2020/21 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2021/22
<p>completing the Programme. Complementary reports were prepared for CLT in July setting out proposals for the resumption of the work. The CCRU have now been re-engaged with a new member of staff and internal staff resource also identified to progress the project. It is therefore anticipated that work on the project can now be picked up once more through the Autumn.</p>	<p>As a further step, an inventory of all IT systems used by services has been collated – and has been passed to the ICT team to link in with IT disaster recovery.</p> <p>Later in 2022, the initial project had been completed and reported. Internal Audit have since undertaken a review and have provided an initial draft report in October 2022. This acknowledges progress made and highlights areas for further action. An action plan is to be agreed regards further developments required going forward.</p>

Significant Governance Issues 2022/23

5.3 The Council is committed to achieving its objectives through good governance and continuous improvement. Going forward, the Council will continue to ensure the effective delivery of its objectives and manages its resources to meet the ongoing financial challenges being faced. Detailed below are significant governance issues and actions planned to address these in 2022/23.

<p>Continued impact of COVID 19</p>	<p>Covid 19 continues to have a major impact in the borough. There are three main ways in which this is felt.</p> <p>Firstly, the impact on population health and the increase in health inequalities. Obesity rates, including in children, have increased, as has the proportion of people who are drinking excessive amounts of alcohol. These behavioural changes will add to the burden of disease in our population. We are mitigating this through our health promotion and behaviour change programmes, but these take time to show results.</p>
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	<p>Secondly, the impact of the reduction of services, particularly health and education, in the pandemic has led to a backlog of activity and a need for remedial action to catch up. However, capacity within services is limited and public needs and expectations are high.</p> <p>Thirdly, there is a risk of further waves, or a vaccine resistant variant emerging. This could require standing up of testing or contact tracing, or a reintroduction of social isolation measures. We have retained a core workforce to support any such actions and they are employed until 31st March 2023. We have also ensured that our learning from the pandemic is recorded and included in the organisation's outbreak and business continuity plans.</p>
<p>Climate Change Emergency</p>	<p>All available indicators suggest that climate change is already occurring and will, if anything, become more prominent. The impact is considered to be high as a minimum (very high without mitigation) as the consequence of climate change give rise to unpredictable and severe weather events occurring with increased regularity. These will in turn have significant impacts on the environment, economy and society. In short, the impacts are wide ranging and cross cutting in character.</p> <p>Trafford will continue to address this on a number of fronts with the completion of two studies looking at the greening of Trafford Park and its transition to a low carbon future. Complimentary work is underway to prepare for a heat network around the Civic Quarter and Stretford. The Public sector decarbonisation programme is ongoing, along with the expansion of the EV charging network in the Borough and the delivery of new active travel schemes.</p>
<p>Medium term financial position</p>	<p>The Council's budget gap for 2023/24 and 2024/25 is currently estimated at £35.4m, with £25.8m in 2023/24; this takes into account the current estimate of the impact of inflation. It is fair to say there is still a large amount of uncertainty in the projections and a range of budget assumptions have been included in the forecast position. Since February a Finance and Change Board has met to develop a sustainable savings programme to address this position. In October a draft budget report was presented to Executive on proposals to help balance the 2023/24 budget. This report identified that significant work had been achieved but a gap of £8.5m still remained and therefore the work of the Board will continue to identify proposals to bridge this position. The Executive is clear that reserves cannot be relied upon to bridge the remaining gap due to their precariously low level.</p>

	<p>The financial landscape continues to be uncertain and despite setting a balanced budget for 2022/23 there are some underlying pressures in children’s placement costs, home to school transport and wage and energy price pressures which are currently estimated to exceed the budget by £6m (period 6 position). This will put pressure on the delivery of Council services during the year if additional funding isn’t received from Government which is now highly unlikely. Reforms affecting both children’s and adult services will impact on medium term budget planning, particularly the planned reforms related to adult social care charging which are due to be implemented by 1/10/2023. These will have serious adverse impacts on the Council’s budget and ability to recruit both social work and finance staff to administer the new proposals.</p>
<p>Information Governance</p>	<p>Trafford Council operates an Information Governance Framework with accountability and oversight through assigned roles of the Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO), (currently the Director of Legal & Governance) and the Data Protection Officer (DPO).</p> <p>Data Security</p> <p>The management and monitoring of information risks is the responsibility of the councils Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) and information risks and serious data breach incidents are reviewed with the councils Data Protection Officer (DPO) to decide on appropriate action and mitigating treatment plan. The Council have an appointed Chief Digital Officer (CDO) with responsibility for the councils Cybersecurity compliance who works closely with the SIRO and Data Protection Officer.</p> <p>Due to a lack of asset management tools (i.e. Configuration Management Database – CMDB) and no definitive list of system or data owners, it has been difficult for the council to have a full inventory of software types, versions and the related support contracts. Unsupported software was primarily identified as part of the annual IT Health Check which details all software vulnerabilities.</p> <p>A number of workflows have been set-up through the implementation of Trafford Council’s new IT Service Management platform (FreshService) to better identify unsupported software which include;</p>

- **Consolidation of software catalogue** – The IT and Digital Software Catalogue has been updated in line with the development of Fresh Service to ensure all items in the software catalogue are still required, and have a support and maintenance contract in place. Periodic reviews have been set-up to ensure only supported and certified software will be available to the business. Any requests for new software will require analysis and a relevant business case submitting via the RDP process. Information gathered by the IT Hub listing all software currently installed on client devices (laptops/ desktops/ tablets) is currently being analysed to identify unsupported software and build an up-to-date software catalogue.

 - **Creation of IT and Digital Asset function** – Trafford Council IT and Digital have created a new function and team to look after all IT assets. All software will be included in their remit, with processes and procedures in place to ensure all software is fully managed throughout its lifecycle, in conjunction with our Business Analysts, Infrastructure Support and Infrastructure Development teams.

 - **Proactive vulnerability monitoring and management** – Trafford Council IT and Digital are working with security partners TNP to implement a Security Incident Event Monitoring (SIEM) system, this will provide proactive alerting and monitoring of Trafford Council's server estate enabling easier identification of vulnerabilities or potential compromise. Alongside this, scheduled scans of the server estate are being set-up to provide scanning of systems and software to identify vulnerabilities. As part of this, an initial scan has taken place to provide an up-to-date list of all out of support software. Work is underway to remediate/ mitigate the risks associated with these.
- The councils newly appointed Cybersecurity Officer is leading on this project with support from our Infrastructure Support team.
- **Business Impact Assessments (BIA)** – As part of a review of Trafford Council's business continuity plans, each business function has been tasked with completing a BIA, part of this work involves listing all software used by that function and the current support

status. This information has fed into the other tranches of work to build a full picture of the software estate.

Data Protection Act 2018 and FOI Act 2000 compliance

With a shortage of appropriate permanent, fixed term, or interim IG resources available this has had a significant negative impact in the council's efforts to achieve overall compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018, FOI Act 2000 and UK GDPR. Despite best efforts coupled with a year on year increase in requests, this has resulted in the council regrettably breaching the statutory response timeframes for both Subject Access Requests (SARs) and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests with an increasing number of complaints from the public demanding an explanation for these delays. There are ongoing efforts to reduce the response delays.

FOI Requests

The Council receives a high volume of FOI requests, with 1237 received in 2021 and so far in 2022 we have received 1007. The current compliance rate stands at 64% despite best efforts which falls way short of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) compliance rate expectation of 95%.

SARs

The Council received 176 SARs in 2021 and has received 98 in 2022 so far. However we receive a high number of complex SARs which are voluminous in content. Our current compliance rate is just over 50% which again falls short of the ICO regulators compliance requirement.

Data breaches

There were 66 data breaches that have been reported to the Data Protection Officer and SIRO in 2021, and there have been 57 to date in 2022. The council is now under the Information Commissioner's (ICO) watch list and it is possible that unless these compliance rates improve

the ICO may consider investigating the council potentially resulting in sanction including a monetary penalty being imposed by the ICO. The council is therefore making every effort to remedy this issue to ensure that we meet the ICO's target expectations.

NHS Data Security and Protection Toolkit

The Data Security and Protection Toolkit is an online self-assessment tool that enables organisation's to measure the council's performance against the National Data Guardian's 10 data security standards. As a Category 3 organisation, with access to NHS patient data, the council is required to complete and submit an annual self-assessment against the mandatory DSPT standards with our last submission made in June 2022.

The council had failed to meet the 95% data security training compliance requirement included in the Toolkit and still needs to achieve compliance with most of the mandatory assertions linked to the NHS Data Security and Protection Toolkit, which is now under review by internal audit. A lack of compliance will also impact the Council's contractual obligations linked to the new NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board (ICB) which also includes our service level agreement with the ICB for the provision the provision of ICT and associated support.

Records Management

A light touch review of Records Management for paper based including off-site storage has been undertaken. As part of the review it has been recommended that an urgent audit of all records retained in off-site at the Restore storage facility needs to be undertaken in line with the councils review, retain and disposal schedule of records. This will require input from all Heads of Service to ensure data is not kept beyond appropriate time frames. This is also linked to a series of data breaches involving the loss of paper based social care records stored at this off-site storage facility.

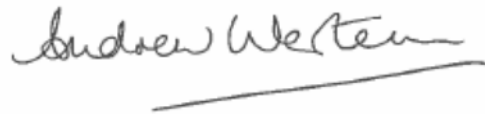
As part of the MS Office 365 roll-out directorates across the council have been advised by ICT and the Information Governance team to review their files in line with the council's retention schedule prior to the transition over to Office 365.

<p>Joint Venture partner fails to deliver services to the required standards</p>	<p>The Covid-19 pandemic has delayed negotiations and the JV Partner's performance during the period has continued to be generally good, though inconsistent. Action will be taken to address underperformance in line with the mechanisms set out in the contract.</p> <p>Work to achieve significant improvements in the delivery of the contract are ongoing with Member oversight and input from stakeholders, including residents. The 7-year review process review process has been extended due to COVID interference with evaluation and negotiation and is due to complete in 2022/23. A separate review of current governance arrangements is also scheduled for 2022/23.</p>
<p>Leisure Services</p>	<p>The refurbishment programme will deliver improved facilities that will support the Councils corporate and borough wide strategic priorities. Through tailored place-based programming, centres will help address health inequalities and improve community health and wellbeing outcomes.</p> <p>The revenue budget and reserves approved by Council in February 2022 included support for a full range of leisure provision for 2022/23 and over the medium term. Plans for the refurbishment of Altrincham, Stretford and Sale leisure centres continue, with the aim of works commencing on Altrincham in the new year, subject to planning permission. In addition, a Levelling Up Fund bid has been submitted for Partington Sports village.</p> <p>To further mitigate risk related to the Leisure investment, the Council have commissioned independent due diligence and updates of the business plans for each centre by Leisure consultants, Max Associates.</p> <p>Progressing work on a new operating agreement for Trafford Leisure is a priority for 2022/23.</p>
<p>Impact of Brexit</p>	<p>The true impact of Brexit both in terms of challenges and opportunities have tended to be masked by onset of the pandemic. It is only in 2022 as regular activity has substantially resumed that the impacts become more obvious.</p> <p>The majority of companies operating within Trafford have adjusted to the restrictions on trade with Europe and the changes in workforce. However, uncertainties remain, especially with ongoing changes linked to the Northern Ireland Protocol, which could result in further trading</p>

	restrictions through 2022/23 should relations with the EU deteriorate. In contrast, the economic benefits of Brexit are less obvious and will take longer to be established.
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The Council is committed to achieving its objectives through good governance and continuous improvement. Going forward, the Council will continue to ensure it delivers its objectives and manages its resources to meet the ongoing financial challenges being faced.

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.



Councillor Andrew Western
Leader of the Council



Sara Todd
Chief Executive